GOTLAND

IF YOU LIKE NATURE AND HISTORY VISIT GOTLAND

REENACTMENT OF KING VALDEMAR'S ENTRANCE INTO VISBY

MEDIEVAL WEEK IN GOTLAND

Every year, during the Medieval Week in Gotland, a historical reenactment of King Valdemar IV of Denmark's entrance and ransoming of Visby is staged at the historical site. Since 2011, the Battle of Visby itself is reenacted outside the Visby city wall with participants from historical societies from several European countries and the United State

Serenade of the Seas at the pier in the cruise ship harbor, 2019

Geography

Location Baltic Sea

Coordinates 57°30′N 18°33′ECoordinates: 57°30′N 18°33′E

Archipelago Slite archipelagoTotal islands 14 large + a number of smaller

Major islands Gotland, Fårö, Gotska Sandön, Stora Karlsö, Lilla Karlsö, Furillen

Area 3,183.7 km2 (1,229.2 sq mi)

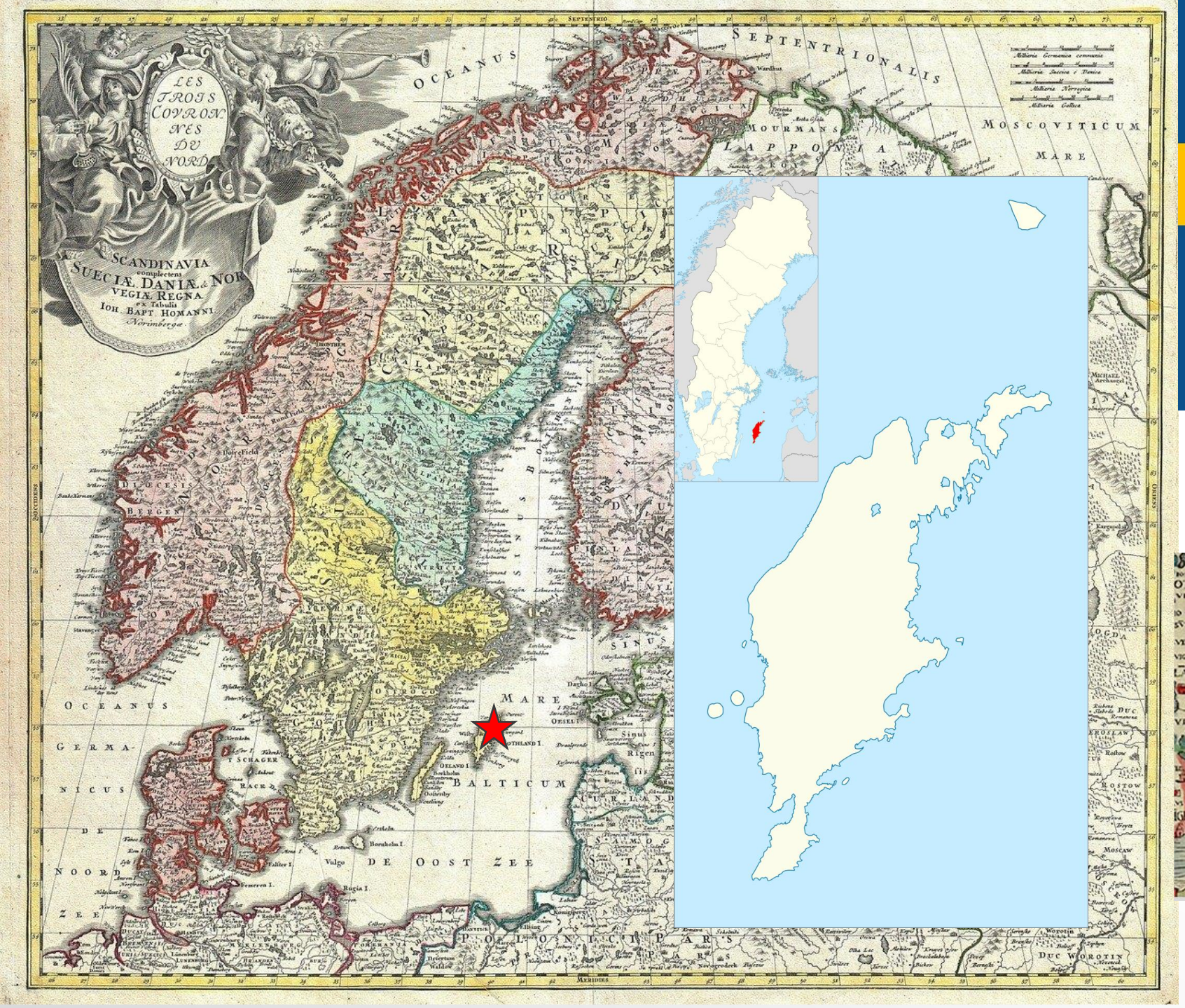
Length 176 km (109.4 mi)

Width 52 km (32.3 mi)

Coastline 800 km (500 mi) (including Fårö)

The province includes the islands of Fårö and Gotska Sandön to the north, as well as the Karlsö Islands (Lilla and Stora) to the west. The population is 58,595, of which about 23,600 live in Visby, the main town. The island of Gotland and the other areas of the province of Gotland make up less than one percent of Sweden's total land area.

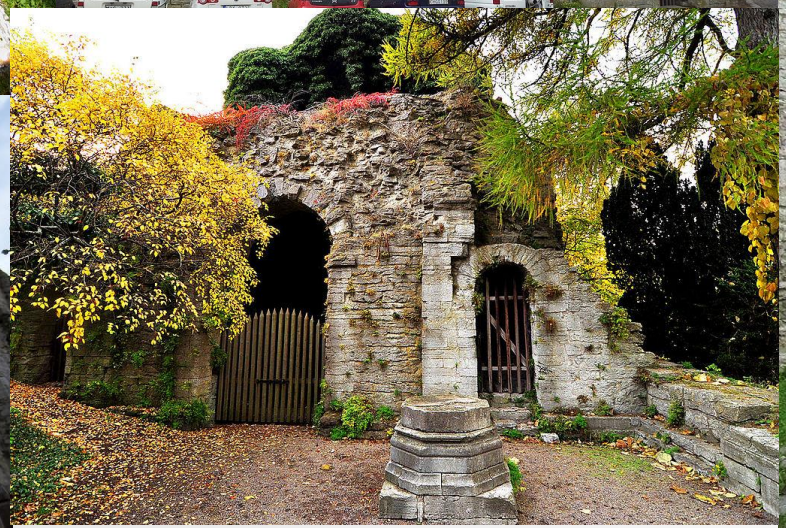
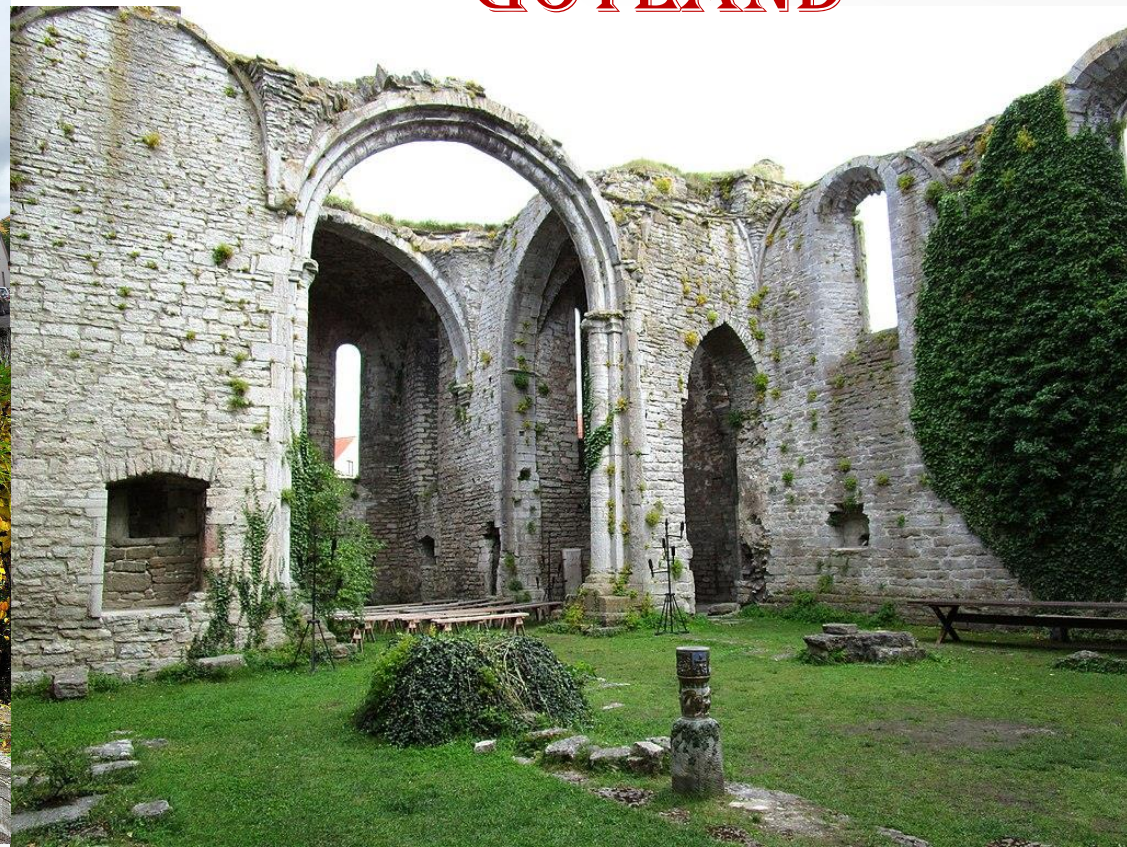
The island's main sources of income are agriculture, food processing, tourism, information technology services, design, and some heavy industry such as concrete production from locally mined limestone. From a military viewpoint, it occupies a strategic location in the Baltic sea. As of 2018 the Gotland Regiment has been re-raised and it is the first time since World War II that a new regiment has been established in Sweden.



Gotland in Carta Marina 1539.

Prehistoric time to Viking Age

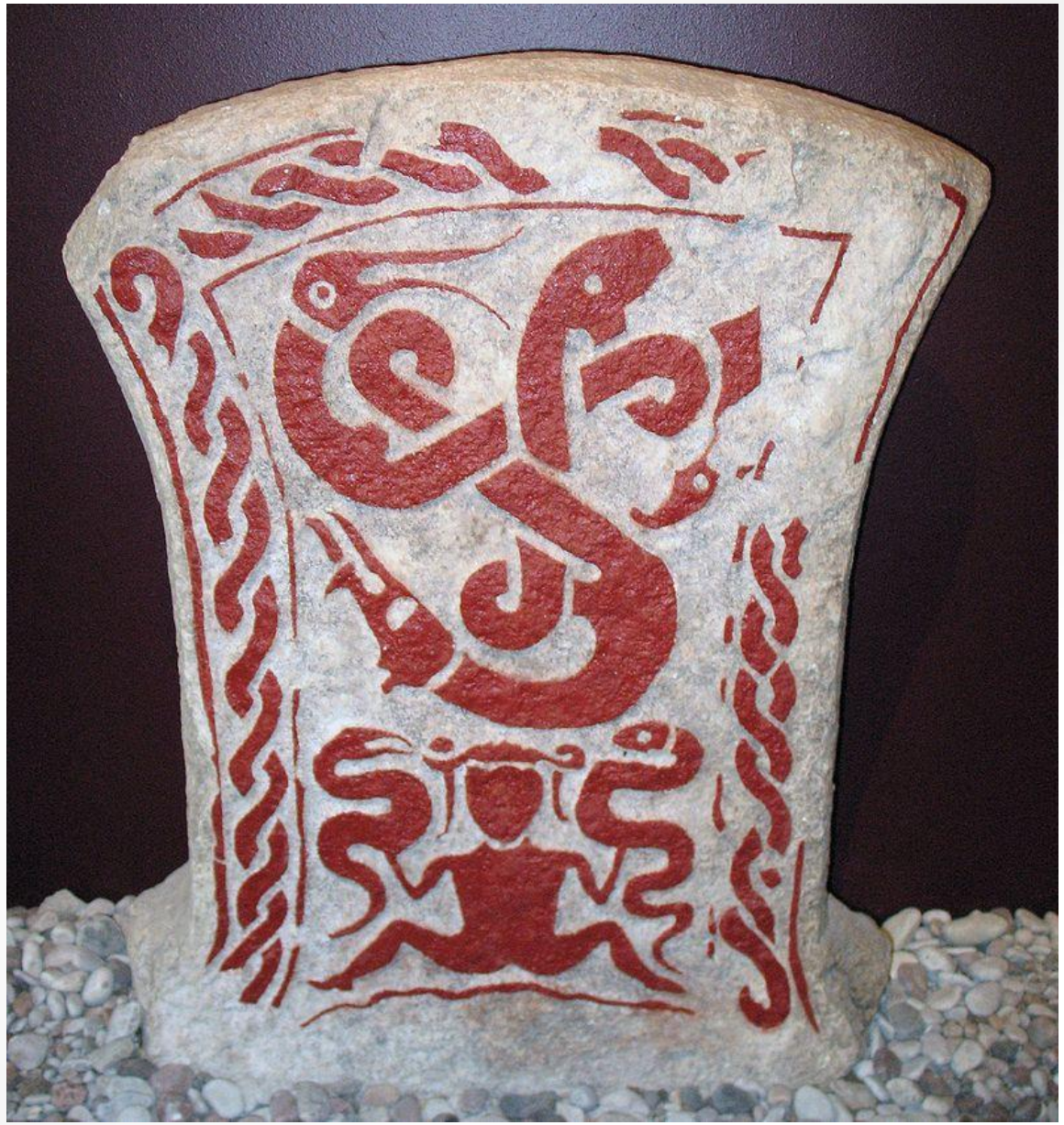
The island is the home of the Gutes, and sites such as the Ajvide Settlement show that it has been occupied since prehistory. A DNA study conducted on the 5,000-year-old skeletal remains of three Middle Neolithic seal hunters from Gotland showed that they were related to modern-day Finns, while a farmer from Gökhem parish in Västergötland on the mainland was found to be more closely related to modern-day Mediterraneans. This is consistent with the spread of agricultural peoples from the Middle East at about that time.

GOTLAND

Gutasaga contains legends of how the island was settled by Þieluar and populated by his descendants. It also tells that a third of the population had to emigrate and settle in southern Europe, a tradition associated with the migration of the Goths, whose name has the same origin as Gutes, the native name of the people of the island. It later tells that the Gutes voluntarily submitted to the king of Sweden and asserts that the submission was based on mutual agreement, and notes the duties and obligations of the Swedish King and Bishop in relationship to Gotland. According to some historians, it is therefore an effort not only to write down the history of Gotland, but also to assert Gotland's independence from Sweden

Gutasaga (Gutasagan) is a saga regarding the history of Gotland before its Christianization. It was recorded in the 13th century and survives in only a single manuscript, the Codex Holm. B 64, dating to ca. 1350, kept at the National Library of Sweden in Stockholm together with the Gutalag, the legal code of Gotland. It was written in the Old Gutnish language variety related to Old Norse.



A local creation myth

The saga begins with Gotland being discovered by a man named Þieluar (Tjalve) (Gutnish: Tjelvar). He was a mythical figure who shows up twice in the Prose Edda and once in Gutasaga. Gotland is under a spell and under water during the day and out of water only during the night, a spell that is broken by Þieluar lighting a fire on the Island. Þieluar's son Hafþi (Havde) and his wife Vitastjerna (Gutnish: Hwitastierna) had three sons named Graip, Gute and Gunfjaun, the ancestors of the Gutes. After Havde's and Vitastjerna's first night together, she had a dream about three snakes entwined in her bosom. This was interpreted as a symbol that all things are connected in circles and that they would have three sons. The subject is depicted on some of the picture stones on Gotland. The saga says that after his father died, Gute was appointed to be the chief, and shall have given his name to both the island and the Gutnish people. They shared Gotland, where Gute held the midsection, Graip the northern and Gunnfjaun the southern part. Gotland was divided in three parts, a division that was reflected in a division of Gotland into three Tredingar, a division that remained legally to 1747[3] and still remains within the church, which still today retains this division into three Deaneries.

"All things are connected in circles" from Gutasaga

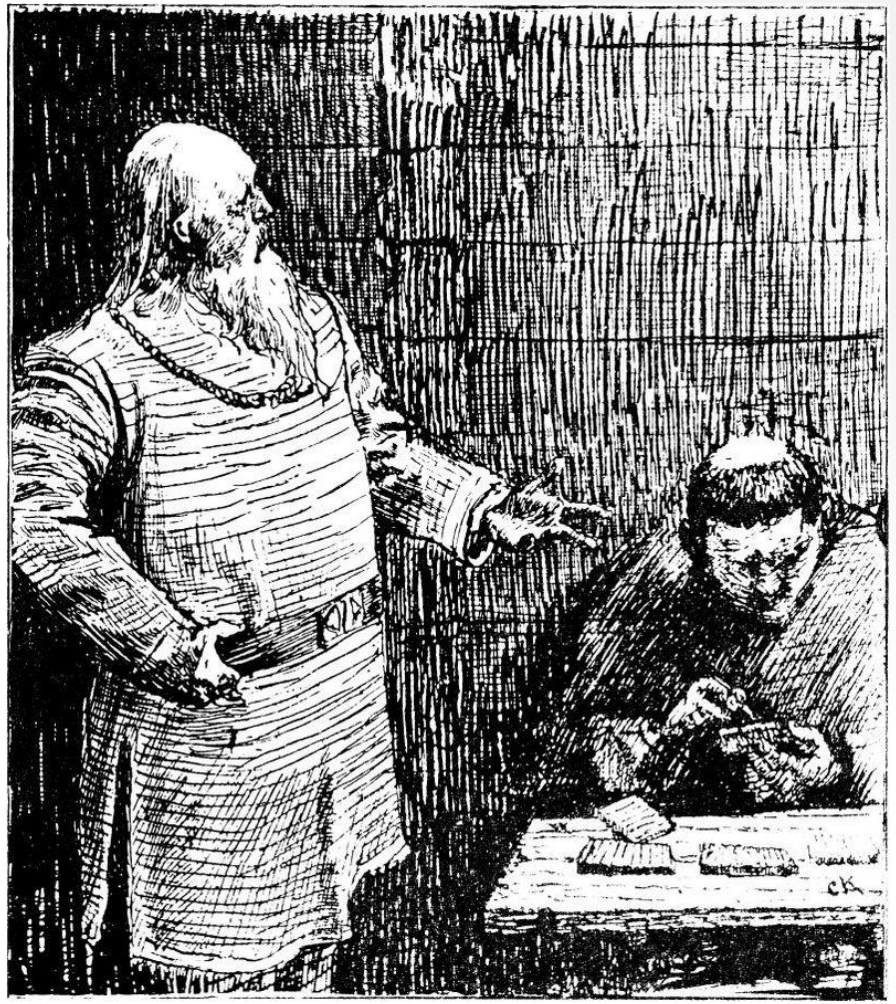
The saga tells of an emigration that is associated with the historical migration of the Goths during the Migration Period:

over a long time, the people descended from these three multiplied so much that the land couldn't support them all. Then they draw lots, and every third person was picked to leave, and they could keep everything they owned and take it with them, except for their land. ... they went up the river Dvina, up through Russia. They went so far that they came to the land of the Greeks. ... they settled there, and live there still, and still have something of our language.

Entry into the Kingdom of Sweden

The Gutasaga contains several references to the relationship between Gotland and Sweden, and asserts that it is based on mutual agreements, and notes the duties and obligations of the Swedish King and Bishop in relationship to Gotland. It is therefore not only an effort to write down the history of Gotland, but also an effort to assert Gotland's independence from Sweden.

It gives Awair Strabain as the man who arranged the mutually beneficial agreement with the king of Sweden, and the event would have taken place before the end of the 9th century, when Wulfstan of Hedeby reported that the island was subject to the Swedes.



Snorri Sturluson, portrait by Christian Krohg: Illustration for Heimskringla 1899-Edition

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TRE KRONOR
STOCKHOLM

DOMKYRKAN
STORA TORGET

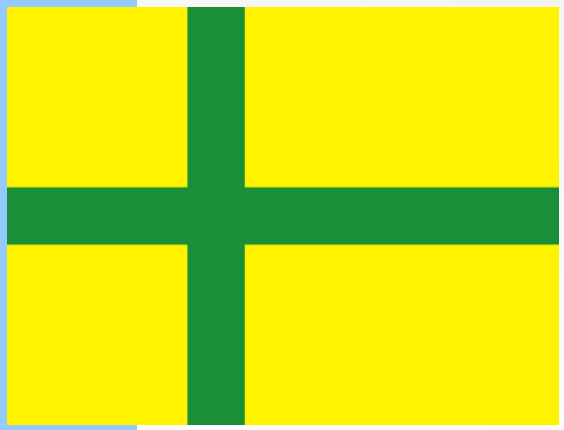
GOTLANDIA
DESTINATION GOTLAND

LUMMELUNDAGROTTORNA

SJÖHISTORISKA

BraMässor

Unofficial flag of Gotland



Sockens on Gotland. The sockens are written in small text, the bolder names are the names of the municipalities existing 1950–1970.

Gotland is located about 90 km (56 mi) east of the Swedish mainland and about 130 km (81 mi) from the Baltic states, Latvia being the nearest. Gotland is the name of the main island, but the adjacent islands are generally considered part of Gotland and the Gotlandic culture:

Climate

Furillen

Fårö

Gotska Sandön, a National park of Sweden

The Karlsö Islands (Stora Karlsö and Lilla Karlsö)

Laus holmar

Ytterholmen

Östergarnsholm

Climate

Gotland has a semi-continental variety of a marine climate. This results in larger seasonal differences than typical of marine climates in spite of it being surrounded by the Baltic Sea for large distances in all directions. This is due to strong continental winds travelling over the sea from surrounding great landmasses.

Limestone mound and the abandoned quarry carts

GotskaSandon EastSide

The Castal adjacent Lau Church

Annas nöje, summer house in Katthammarsvik, Östergarn

Rauks at Langhammars, Fårö

Norsta Aurar beach on Fårö

1960

Stora Karlsö

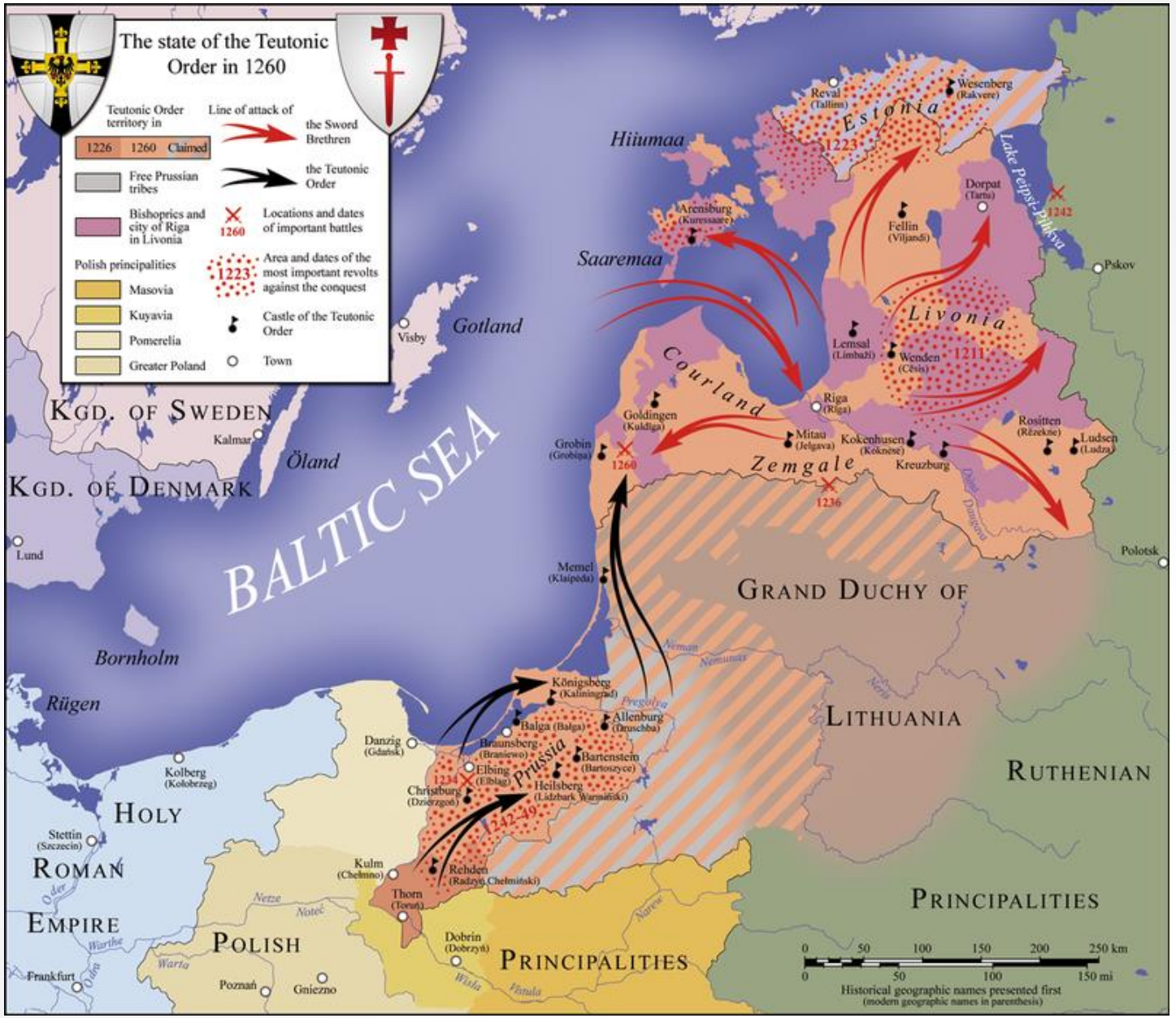
Slite year 1947

Gotland in Carta Marina 1539.

The work on the ring wall was likely begun in the 12th century. Around 1300, it was rebuilt to reach its current height, acquiring the characteristic towers, although some towers were not constructed until the 15th century. The ringwall is still largely intact.

In the first half of the fourteenth century (1300-1350) Visby was at the height of its wealth and influence, and it was during this time that Laws of Wisbuy, a set of maritime laws that had broad influence in the Baltic and beyond, were probably promulgated.

1399 TYSKA ORDEN



Tyska orden 1260.

In 1361, Gotland was conquered by Valdemar IV of Denmark. 1,800 Gotlanders were killed in battle in front of the city. Valdemar tore down part of the wall, set up three huge beer barrels and threatened to turn his men loose to pillage the town unless they were filled with silver and gold. The Visby city fathers fulfilled the demand, with churches stripped of their valuables. Valdemar added "King of Gotland" to his title list. His treatment of Visby, a member of the Hanseatic League, precipitated that League into war with Denmark; however, though Valdemar was forced into various concessions, he retained Visby as a Danish city.

In 1391, 1394 and 1398, it was taken and plundered by the Victual Brothers, pirates who sailed the Baltic Sea. An invading army of Teutonic Knights conquered Gotland in 1398, destroyed Visby and expelled the Victual Brothers. In 1409, Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen of the Teutonic Knights guaranteed peace with the Kalmar Union of Scandinavia by selling the island of Gotland to Queen Margaret of Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

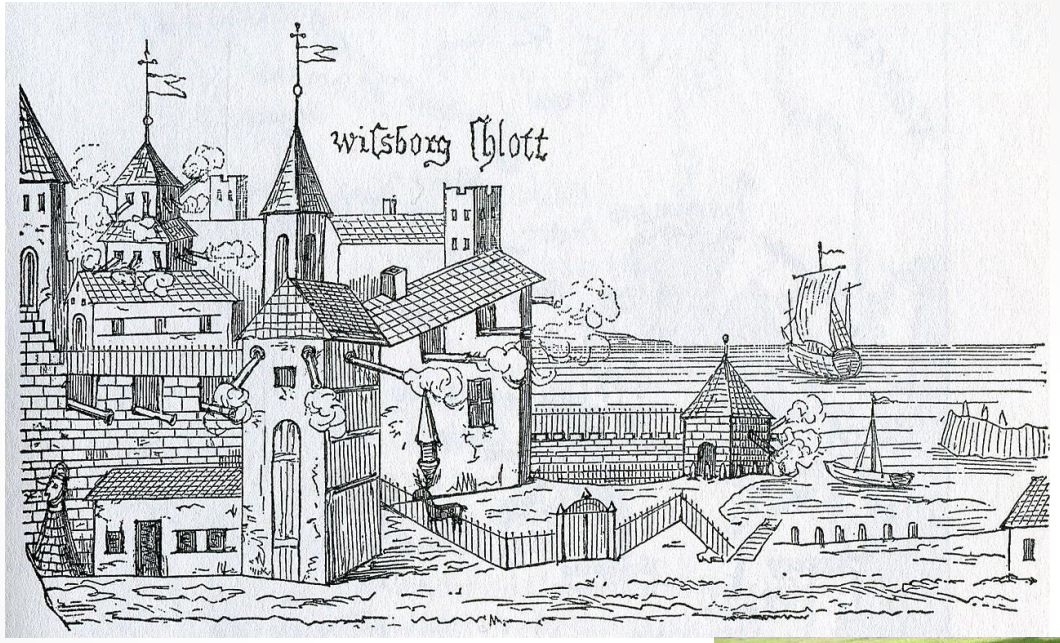
Valdemar Atterdag holding Visby to ransom, 1361, by Carl Gustaf Hellqvist (1851–1890).

In 1411, the Norwegian, Danish and Swedish King Eric of Pomerania had the castle of Visborg constructed, and settled himself there for twelve years, during which the city virtually became a pirates' nest, and the commerce halted. As of 1470, the Hanseatic League rescinded Visby's status as a Hanseatic town.

In 1525, the final blow came. In the Danish throne quarrel, the Lübeck, a Free City of the Holy Roman Empire and a leading member of the Hanseatic League, supported Frederick I, while Søren Norby the Danish governor of Gotland fought for Christian II, even after Christian's official resignation in 1523. While Norby fought a military action in Sweden, the Lübeckers successfully attacked Visby and set the city on fire from four sites. But unlike widespread belief, several churches survived at first. The churches of St. James (which already had been closed before), St. Nicholas and St. Gertrude were sacked by Lübeck's army.

Erich 9 : S : till pomern Oron
ing magretis Sester datter
Regierred 36 aar forlod Rige
Anno 1438 . dode till Rigen
Wolff sit frederneland Anno
1458 :

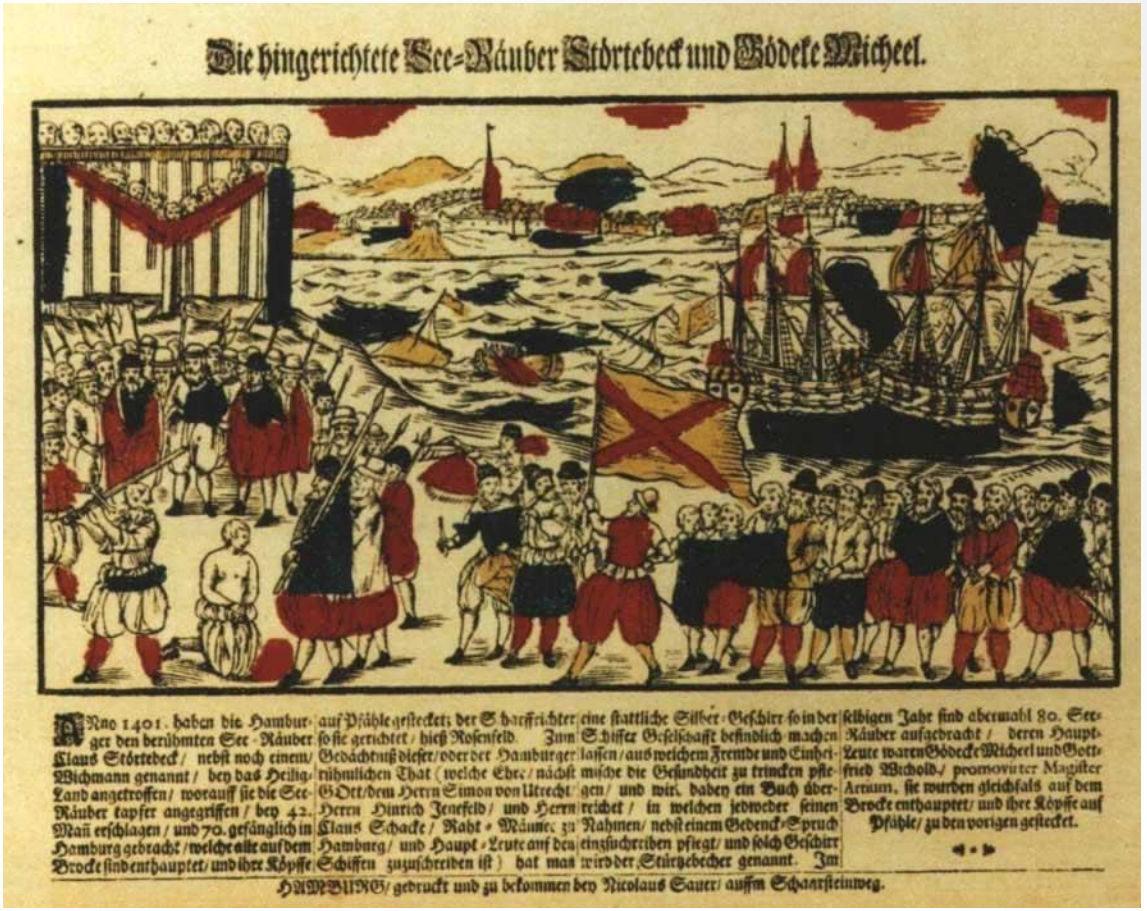
Danish and Swedish king Eric of Pomerania had the castle of Visborg



The Victual Brothers) were a loosely organized guild of privateers who later turned to piracy. They affected maritime trade during the 14th century in both the North and Baltic seas.

During the 14th century, Queen Margaret I of Denmark was battling Albert of Mecklenburg for Scandinavian supremacy. Albert had been King of Sweden since 1364 and Duke of Mecklenburg since 1383. The Vitalian Brotherhood were hired in 1392 by the Dukes of Mecklenburg to fight against Denmark, after Queen Margaret had imprisoned Albert and his son Eric of Mecklenburg in order to subdue the Kingdom of Sweden.

After the Victual Brothers' defeat and expulsion from Gotland in 1398, the Hanseatic League tried repeatedly but unsuccessfully to completely control the Baltic Sea. Many Victual Brothers still remained at sea. When they lost their influence in the Gulf of Bothnia, the Gulf of Finland and Gotland, they operated from the Schlei, the mouth of the river Ems and other locations in Friesland. The successors to the Victual Brothers gave themselves the name Likedeelers ("equal sharers"): they shared with the poor coastal population. They expanded their activities into the North Sea and along the Atlantic coastline, raiding Brabant and France and striking as far south as Spain.


Die hingerichtete See-Räuber Störtebeck und Gödeke Micheel.
Anno 1401. haben die Hamburger den berühmten See-Räuber Claus Störtebeck / nebst noch einem / Wichmann genannt / bey das Heilige Land angetroffen / worauff sie die See-Räuber tapfer angegriffen / bey 42. Mann erschlagen / und 70. gefänglich in Hamburg gebracht / welche alle auf dem Brock sind enthauptet / und ihre Köpffe auf Pfähle gesteckt; der Scharfrichter so sie gerichtet / hieß Rosenfeld. Zum Gedächtniß dieser / oder der Hamburger rühmlichen That (welche Ehre / nächst GOtt / dem Herrn Simon von Utrecht / Herrn Hinrich Jenefeld / und Herrn Claus Schacke / Rahts-Männer zu Hamburg / und Haupt-Leute auf den Schiffen zuzuschreiben ist) hat man eine stattliche Silber-Geschirr so in der Schiffer Gesellschafft befindlich machen lassen / aus welchem Fremde und Einheimische / und wir. dabey ein Buch überreichet / in welchen jedweder seinen Nahmen / nebst einem Gedenck-Spruch einzuschreiben pflegt / und solch Geschirr wird der Stürtzebecher genannt. Im selbigen Jahr sind abermahl 80. See-Räuber aufgebracht / deren Haupt-Leute waren Gödecke Michael und Gottfried Wichold / promovirter Magister Artium, sie wurden gleichfalls auf dem Brocke enthauptet / und ihre Köpffe auf Pfähle / zu den vorigen gesteckt.
HAMBURG / gedruckt und zu bekommen bey Nicolaus Sauer / auffm Schauensteinweg.

The summary execution of Störtebeker, 1401; tinted woodcut tby Nicolaus Sauer, Hamburg, 1701 (Hamburger Staatsarchiv)

Gotland was again taken into Sweden's possession in 1645, by the Treaty of Brömsebro, after 300 years of Danish rule. The city developed slowly as things were left as they were. In the mid 18th century, after a plague had reduced Visby's population, some attempts were made by Swedish government officials to improve living standards, but little was accomplished. Not until the early 19th century did Visby once again attract commerce and a harbour industry. At the same time – 1808 – Gotland was conquered by Russia, but was peacefully taken back by the Swedes after only a couple of months.

General view towards the Cathedral from Övre Finngränd on Klinten

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How to get to Gotland

Visby is linked to the mainland of Sweden by ferry and by plane. Ferries arrive from both Oskarshamn in Småland and Nynäshamn, near Stockholm, each taking about three hours. The ferries are run by Destination Gotland and subsidized by the Swedish government. Destination Gotland is the only ferry operator – in summer 2016, independent shipping company Gotlandsbåten ran ferries to Västervik and Nynäshamn, but this service was unprofitable and was not repeated in 2017.

Visby Airport is located about 5 km (3.1 mi) north of the city and offers connections to the Swedish mainland. With 467,857 passengers in 2018, it is the 9th largest airport in Sweden. Daily flights to Stockholm Arlanda Airport is a common way to reach or depart from the island.

There are also city buses in Visby as well as buses to other parts of Gotland.